

Beyond Patriarchy: Eco-Masculinity as an Alternative Masculine Identity in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman*

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of eco-masculinity as an alternative framework to understand masculine identities, with a focus on Perumal Murugan's One Part Woman. Traditional patriarchal norms define masculinity through domination, virility, and reproductive success, marginalizing men who do not conform. Eco-masculinity, on the other hand, emphasizes the value of caring, reciprocity, and the interconnectedness of men, land, and non-human life as legitimate manifestations of masculinity. This alternative approach is best illustrated by the character Kali, whose masculinity is based on his closeness to the earth, his compassion for cattle and his synchronization with ecological cycles. While society ridicules him for his infertility and forces his wife into coercive rituals of reproduction, his dignity emerges from ecological stewardship and emotional vulnerability.

Through this lens, Kali's woundedness is exposed as the result of patriarchal erasure of alternative masculinity rather than as a personal weakness. Eco-masculinity not only challenges the violence of patriarchal systems but also gestures toward sustainable, ethical models of manhood that affirm both human and ecological survival. By reading One Part Woman, this paper argues that eco-masculinity provides a transformative framework that redefines masculine identities beyond patriarchal binaries, making space for tenderness, ecological consciousness, and ethical coexistence.

Keywords: Eco-Masculinity, Infertility, Nature, Hegemonic Masculinity

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Introduction

Perumal Murugan is a distinguished Indian Tamil writer and a professor of Tamil at Government Arts College in Attur, Salem. He has published five poetry collections, six non-fiction books, and eleven novels on language and literature. His contribution to Tamil literature focuses on tribes, culture, caste, and rural traditions in Tamil indigenous society. He won the ILF Samanvay Bhasha Samman 2015. His books, *One Part Woman* and *The Story of a Goat*, were longlisted for the National Book Awards for Translated Literature 2018 and 2020, respectively.

His novel *Pyre* was nominated for the JCB Prize and the Atta Galatta-BLF Award for Translated Literature in 2018. His *Seasons of the Palm* was nominated for the Kiriya Award. His novel *Fire Bird* won the JCB Literature Prize in 2023. Murugan's novel *Madhurobhagan*, which explores the dilemma of caste segregation in a married couple wishing to have a child, was accused of defaming Hinduism by Hindutva supporters, forcing Murugan to proclaim on his Facebook page in 2015 that he would no longer create novels. Murugan declares himself 'dead'. Then he took a literary exile.

In 2016, the Madras High Court ruled that there were no grounds to remove his novels from circulation and urged the government to give artists and literary icons enough security from future attacks. According to Deccan Chronicle (2016), the Madras High Court bench said, "Let the author be resurrected to what he is best at. Write". Murugan's work has increased in popularity worldwide. The fact that two works (*Fire Bird* and *Sandalwood Soaps and Other Stories*) were published in the same month demonstrates a desire for a local, basic tone that readers find engrossing.

The novel of the research, *One Part Women*, is set in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu, in the 1940s, and follows the lives of two Gounder caste members, Ponna and Kali. It illuminates the deeper elements of the couple's lives when they are unable to have children after twelve years of marriage. The book's title is a literal translation of its Tamil title, *Madhurobhagan*, which translates to Ardhanareeswara, a half-male, half-female God who lives in the same body. As the story begins, Kali had planted a Portia tree in his in-law's home during the first few months of his marriage. It has thick leaves. Kali was pleased to see his tree mature, but he was also disappointed that, after twelve years of marriage, he had been unable to produce a child for Ponna. The flourishing Portia tree served as a reminder of his failure. All Kali and Ponna had done was try hard to conceive.

To no avail, they tried everything to get Ponna pregnant, including climbing the hill of Tiruchengode Murugan Temple and lighting the sixty lamps for sixty days, drinking various bitter shoots and potions, visiting all temples, no matter how large or small, and even sacrificing her life to walk around the stone at Pandeerswarar Temple. Kali and Ponna were naturally criticized by folks in their near neighbourhood because it was considered unusual for a couple to not become pregnant after a few months of marriage, and twelve years had passed. When

women attending the chariot festival are called 'prostitutes' and men attending the same festival are called 'Gods', it further highlights the egregious sexism that women are enmeshed in.

The author narrates, "Only the man who induced morning sickness in his wife in the very second month of marriage was a real man" (82), which puts pressure on Kali to demonstrate his masculinity, and is another example of how gender norms are evident, and this novel explores the food habits, seasons, home remedies for infertility and preparation of each food item, which play a crucial role in each character's life. Nature plays an important role in the novel because each character has deep affection for nature, and it is reflected in character development also. The portrayal of nature and its symbols indirectly signifies the couple's infertility and Kali's sterility.

The review by Kirkus Reviews (2018) describes the novel as "poignant and sweet, the novel suffers only from a certain roughness in the prose.". According to Sudhagee (2015), *One Part Woman* explores "childlessness, societal pressure, rules, regulations, morality, empowerment, double standards, legend, myth, drama, values, and cultural practices... all merge seamlessly to create *One Part Woman*. The book unfolds at an unhurried pace". A Bookworm's Musing (2018) points out, "The character sketches are vivid, and the author breathes life into them, be it the good or the bad, or the extreme. Innocence or anger, loyalty or misunderstanding, each colour is visible. The book isn't fast-paced, but it is still flowing and mostly engaging. I loved the cover art, which is the first thing a reader would notice of course".

Objective and Aim:

This article is set to investigate Perumal Murugan's *One Part Women* by deconstructing patriarchal masculinity and identifying Eco-Masculine framework in the novel. Eco-Masculinity studies how men's identities are tied to ecology, fertility and the natural environment rather than only to power and dominance. In *One Part Women*, Kali's masculinity is judged by his ability to father a child, but this capacity is shown to be deeply linked with land, food and seasonal cycles. The fertility of the soil and crops parallels the fertility of his own body, showing how nature and masculinity reflect one another. Kali's despair arises when both nature and society fail to affirm his role as a man. This article studies masculinity, which is not as absolute but as vulnerable to ecological imbalance. This Eco-Masculine reading reveals how culture, body and nature co-create Kali's crisis. Since the novel is deeply rooted in agrarian life, fertility, and social expectations, each character's relationship with land, nature, and gender roles can be understood through eco-masculinity. The article aims to examine the representation of eco-masculinity and its role in redefining masculine identities, highlighting the intersection of gender, environment, and postcolonial cultural dynamics in the novel.

Eco-masculinity:

Eco-masculinity is a fairly new branch of ecological criticism that examines how masculinity is shaped, connected with and expressed through human-nature

relationships. It explores the ways men's identities, powers, and behaviours are constructed in relation to nature and how patriarchal or dominant masculine values; such as control, conquest, and exploitation, often parallel the domination of the environment. At the same time, eco-masculinity also seeks alternative, non-dominant masculinities that embrace care, responsibility and sustainability toward nature and society. To define Eco-Masculinity, one must understand what masculinity or True Masculinity is. In R.W. Connell in her work *Masculinities*, explicates true masculinity. She says that:

True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies—to be inherent in a male body or in express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs actions (e.g., men are naturally more aggressive than women; rape results from uncontrollable lust or an innate urge to violence), or the body sets limits to actions (e.g., men naturally do not take care of infants; homosexuality is unnatural and therefore confined to perverse minority). (Connell 45)

Eco-Masculinity differs from traditional masculinity. Because hegemonic masculinity prioritizes dominance, aggression and the subordination of femininity, while Eco-Masculinity (also called ecological masculinism) challenges these norms by promoting caring, nurturing relationships with nature and a rejection of exploitative practices. The Hegemonic masculinity features can be seen in every male from any point of view. To give the proper explanation, R.W. Connell in *Masculinities*, coined the new theoretical frame called 'Hegemonic Masculinity' to define dominating male characters. She says that:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell 77)

The term 'Ecological Masculinity' emerged from the confluence of gender studies, environmental sociology, and critical masculinity studies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Its conceptual origins lie in scholarly critiques of patriarchal systems and their perceived connections to environmental exploitation. Researchers began investigating how prevailing ideals of masculinity might perpetuate unsustainable practices and sought to construct alternative masculinities that foster environmental responsibility. This intellectual advancement signifies an increasing recognition of the interplay between social constructs and ecological consequences.

Within the context of sustainability, ecological masculinity addresses how gendered expectations influence environmental behaviours and policy developments. It acknowledges that traditional masculine ideals, often linked to industrial expansion and resource consumption, can impede progress towards ecological balance. Promoting this framework encourages men to adopt sustainable lifestyles, advocating for resource conservation and reduced ecological footprints. It offers a pathway for men to contribute positively to social and environmental justice

initiatives, fostering a more equitable and regenerative future for all life.

The application of ecological masculinity extends to various sustainability initiatives, including community-led conservation efforts and corporate environmental governance. It informs educational programs designed to shape gender norms regarding consumption and environmental impacts. This perspective also guides policy development aimed at fostering sustainable resource management and equitable distribution of environmental benefits. Furthermore, it supports advocacy for climate actions by engaging men as agents of change, promoting collaborative approaches to environmental problem-solving and systemic transformation.

Ecological masculinity represents a conceptual framework that redefines male identity in alignment with ecological well-being and responsible planetary stewardship. This approach challenges conventional masculine norms that often contribute to environmental degradation and resource depletion. It proposes a revised understanding of male roles, one that emphasizes interdependence with natural systems rather than dominance over them. This concept signifies a critical re-evaluation of societal roles necessary for achieving a balanced relationship with the environment.

Pule, in his thesis *A Declaration of Caring: Towards Ecological Masculinism*, promotes the idea of 'ecological masculinism' to involve men in environmentally favourable behaviours and movements. Mark Allister's anthology titled *Eco Man* (2004) constructs the idea of Eco Man as an alternative perspective on men and nature within the nature of ecocriticism. Similarly, Martin Hultman and P. Pule brought out a definitive collection of essays in the field of ecological masculinism. *Ecological Masculinities Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance* (2018), wherein Hultman discusses three forms of masculinities having extensive and varied impacts on nature: industrial, eco-modern and ecological masculinities, who declares that:

Industrial/breadwinner and Eco modern masculinities have courted mainstream norms (and their entwined relationship with industrial extractivism) as their shared hidden drivers. In doing so, both categories have either directly exacerbated social inequities and environmental challenges or failed to seize opportunities to protect and preserve all life for the long term. (51)

Additionally, they have provided a definition of 'Ecological Masculinism' by referencing Donaldson's works to explain the connection between masculinity and nature. According to them, Eco masculinity:

Served as 'social actors' not only 'surveying their own historical process' but were also actively engaged in creating 'new ecological symbols expressing the meaning of their existence' by 'attempting the ordering of a society based on ecological principles and practices'. (Haltman 7)

Haltman and Pule embraced education and critical analysis, along with the capacity to actively engage with civil society at the personal, familial, local, and

regional levels. They say that:

The valiative choices of these farming men directly impacted their lived experiences at home as well; their 'spirits could become enhanced through nurturing and caring' for all others that then facilitated alternative manifestations of masculinities, distancing them from the male domination patterns that pervade mainstream society in the ways they interacted with and tended to their families. (Haltman 23)

From what started as 'fixing the environment', man has now arrived at being a caretaker of the environment. These books and writers provide a broad basis for the study of eco-masculinity, beginning with the examination of masculinity as dominantly and hegemonically constructed and moving towards a more aware, evolved, caring, non-abusive and cooperative form of masculinity.

Discussion and Analysis:

The protagonist Kali's identity is rooted in farming, and his connection to the soil shapes his masculinity. His masculinity is tied to his ability to cultivate, damage, and live in harmony with the land. Unlike exploitative patriarchal masculinities, which mean industrial/breadwinner masculinity that seeks to dominate nature, Kali embodies an intimate ecological masculinity; his pride and identity stem from being able to persuade life out of soil rather than exploiting it. The farming lifestyle reflects a sustainable masculinity, which also comes under eco-masculinity; he works with the cycle of seasons, rainfall, and soil fertility, accepting human limitations before nature's rhythms. This approach positions him as a counterpoint to hegemonic masculinity, which often equates virility with conquest and domination.

The novel's central conflict is that Kali and Ponna's childlessness connects biological fertility with agricultural fertility. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is judged through reproduction. Kali's inability to father a child becomes a social wound. However, through ecological masculinity, this anxiety can be reframed. Kali is not sterile in relation to the earth. His masculinity is validated by his labour, his ability to care for his fields, and his nurturing life beyond procreation. Perumal Murugan often depicts Kali immersed in natural surroundings like trees, soil, rivers, and winds. His intimacy with the environment provides him solace, acting as a therapeutic ecology when he faces human humiliations. Eco-Masculinity here emphasizes sensitivity rather than dominance: Kali listens to the land, feels connected to its rhythms and measures his identity against its endurance. This sensitivity contrasts with patriarchal masculinities that equate emotional restraint with strength.

Society demands children from him and Ponna, equating masculinity with virility. Kali resists this hegemonic script at many points, choosing not to resort to rituals or humiliating alternatives initially. His masculinity is ecological because it rejects dominance over Ponna, himself, and even fate. Instead, he searches for dignity within eco-existence and acceptance. He embodies a masculinity that is not about conquering but about sustaining. When Ponna is upset about her pregnancy,

Kali encourages her by saying, "Why not, dear, you are only twenty-eight now. You were sixteen when I married you. And you look just the same. Women are giving birth right till they are forty and forty-five. We are not that old'. Their hearts swung between faith and resignation" (14).

This shows that Kali rejects traditional hegemonic masculinity, reflecting the mothering qualities of eco-masculinity. Kali's interactions with Ponna reveal another dimension of ecological masculinity: emotional openness and partnership. Rather than treating Ponna as a vessel for reproduction, Kali respects her personhood and comforts her in their shared suffering. His tenderness contrasts with the patriarchal norms of his community.

Eco-Masculinity emphasizes care, empathy and relationality, contrasting with patriarchal masculinity, which privileges dominance, control and productivity. Kali's relationship with Ponna reflects alternative models which reflect the Eco-Masculinity traits. Instead of asserting authority over Ponna, Kali treats her as an equal partner. Their marriage is characterized by shared experience, intimacy and emotional reciprocity, rather than hierarchical dominance. Eco-Masculinity celebrated emotional openness as a positive masculine trait. Kali demonstrates this consistently with Ponna; he expresses tenderness and vulnerability, showing that masculinity can coexist with compassion. His care for Ponna extends beyond physical intimacy; he nurtures her emotional wellbeing, listens to her concerns, and provides comfort during societal pressure.

Murugan uses ecological metaphors to deepen the understanding of their bond. Ponna is often likened to fertile soil, and Kali's interactions with her reflect care and attentiveness, not exploitation. By equating Ponna with the earth, Kali enacts ecological masculinity in the domestic sphere; he nurtures, tends, and respects her autonomy. Unlike patriarchal society, which reduces women to reproductive functions, Kali recognizes her intrinsic value, mirroring the respect he shows nature. The couple faces constant societal scrutiny because of infertility. Kali resists this objectification by absorbing the social shame himself, refusing to dominate or pressure Ponna. His ecological masculinity manifests as quiet defiance; he prioritizes care and relational balance over social approval or adherence to patriarchal norms. It can also be seen in the novel when Murugesan indirectly points out Kali's disability. Murugan says that:

Something else had happened about a year and a half into Kali and Poona's marriage. People had just started asking about child. According to them, Only the men who induced morning sickness in his wife in the very second month of marriage was real man. When the girl looked unchanged as over a year and half, it simply meant the husband's work was not up to the mark. And the entire bunch of Kali's friends had insinuated this several times. (82)

Kali's wound begins with his inability to become a father. In his agrarian world, fertility is both a biological and ecological metaphor. Just as barren land is considered unproductive, a man without children is mocked as incomplete. Murugan

describes how villagers taunt Kali and Ponna with cruel comments that turn their private grief into public shame. His wounded pride hits reality when Chellappan asks Kali to marry another woman. Chellappan says to Kali during their interaction about selling a cow, Chellappan says that:

One of Kali's cows had failed to yield a calf despite two or three attempts at mating her with a bull... But Chellappan kept his gaze fixed on her as he tied up his hair in a knot. 'It is fate, mapillai,' said Chellappan, 'That is just how some cows are. No matter what do you, they never get pregnant. Just quietly change the cow. If you sat yes, I can fetch you one right away. (10)

Through the ecological masculinity lens, this wound is not simply about sterility but about society's instrumental logic of fertility. Kali is fertile in another sense; he works with soil, cultivates crops, and sustains ecological life, but patriarchy erases this eco-masculine worth. His wound is therefore systemic: that is, defined not by his ecological identity but by patriarchal expectations of virility. Patriarchy equates worth with productivity. Women are reduced to wombs, and men to reproductive seed. Murugan illustrates this societal trap when relatives insist that Ponna attend the festival, reminding her that a woman's body has only one purpose and without it, she is nothing. Kali, too, is trapped. His masculinity is measured solely by his ability to father, just as soil is valued only for its yield. Ecological masculinity critiques this reductionist model, showing how both men and land are devalued when their existence is judged only by productivity. Ponna tears Kali's trust and faith, shattering his heart and leaving him emotionally wounded. It is reflected in his words by saying:

His lips murmured, 'She has cheated you; she has cheated you'. He banged his head against the door. He topknot can undone and rolled down to his nape. You whore he shouted. 'Have you really gone? Have you gone despite my saying no...' All of you gave gotten together and cheated me,' he cried... 'You whore! You cheated me!' he was breathless. 'You will not be happy. You have cheated me, you whore ...' (230-40)

The moment Ponna participates in the chariot festival ritual, where childless women are encouraged to sleep with strangers in hopes of conception; it is often read as 'cheating'. Murugan, on the other hand, sees it as cultural coercion, not a personal betrayal. Ponna herself resists the suggestion, thinking of Kali's dignity, but she is overwhelmed by the pressure of relatives and the unrelenting social humiliation. Ecological masculinity reveals that Ponna's act is not evidence of disloyalty but the culmination of patriarchal violence. Her body is instrumental in fertility. The so-called 'cheating' is therefore a social wound inflicted on both husband and wife, not an individual failure.

What devastates Kali is not only that Ponna sleeps with another man but also that the act reaffirms the patriarchal definition of masculinity. His Eco-masculinity worth in his deep bond with soil, his care for land and his emotional openness becomes invisible. He is reduced to a man whose 'seed' is useless. Eco-masculinity

reframes this wound. Kali's tragedy is not infertility itself but the denial of alternative masculinities that value care, interdependence, and ecological identity.

His wound is society's refusal to acknowledge that manhood can exist outside of virility. Kali's emotional collapse demonstrates the vulnerability at the heart of ecological masculinity. Patriarchy reads this collapse as weakness, but eco-masculinity interprets it as ecological truth; just as farmers depend on rains beyond their control, men too exist in conditions of biological uncertainty. Murugan emphasizes this fragility with images of soil and rain. He says, "The farmers were waiting for the rain so they could begin the first round of ploughing. But while the heat kept rising, not a single smudge of grey could be spotted in the sky. It sowed within them the fear that the rind might fail this year" (69).

This ecological metaphor positions Kali's woundedness not as a personal flaw but as an inevitable part of human dependence on cycles larger than himself. Both Kali and Ponna are wounded by the same patriarchal system. Kali's wound is emasculated by the narrow definition of manhood as virility, and Ponna's wound is reduced to her womb, coerced into a ritual that violates her loyalty to her husband. Ecological masculinity reveals that their tragedy lies not in betrayal between them, but in the systemic betrayal of patriarchal society. Both are denied their ecological humanity, the capacity to live as caring, interdependent beings rather than as reproductive machines.

Ultimately, Kali emerges as the figure of the wounded ecological man. He embodies a masculinity rooted in land and care, but he is destroyed by the hegemonic model that equates manhood with reproduction. His wound is therefore not infertility but the erasure of eco-masculinity in a patriarchal world. Ponna says that, "Even when the body is ready for deep rest, the mind keeps irking it just like the ant from this tree. How can one sleep like that? The barnyard occupied his mind wherever he was. It was only there that he felt safe. It was enough just to be there and talk to the cattle" (70).

For Kali, the land is not just property but an extension of selfhood. He ploughs, tills and cares for soil as if it were part of his body. His sense of dignity comes from his ability to cultivate it, regardless of whether he can produce a child. Through ecological masculinity, this bond shows that manhood can be rooted in nurturing relationships with ecosystems, not in domination. Kali's masculinity is ecological because it works with the rhythms of soil and seasons, recognizing vulnerability and dependence on rain and fertility. Kali's infertility is contrasted with the fertility of his land. His crops sprout, but his lineage does not. Eco-masculinity interprets this as a critique of patriarchal reductionism: society values only biological reproduction, ignoring his ecological fertility expressed through soil, harvests and the cycles of land. His wound arises because patriarchy refuses this bond as a valid measure of masculinity.

Cattle occupy a central place in Kali's life. They are not mere economic assets but companions' extensions of his emotional and ecological identity. He tends to his

cows with affection, speaks to them and shares his solitude with them. Murugan often describes Kali walking with his cattle; his pride is reflected in their strength. In the lens of Eco-masculinity, this bond challenges the anthropocentric and patriarchal view of animals as property. Instead, cattle become part of Kali's masculine ecology, a relationship of care, respect and emotional reciprocity. Whenever Kali is humiliated by society for being childless, he finds a stronghold in his fields and with his cattle.

Eco-Masculinity highlights that nature hereby provides healing masculinity; his land and animals absorb his wounded emotions, offering him a space where his worth is not measured by virility but by care and stewardship. This demonstrates a masculinity that is sustainable, tender and ecologically grounded, rather than exploitative. Eco-Masculinity reframes this by showing that his bond with cattle shows that masculinity is not only about sexual virility but also about strength suppressed through partnership with non-human life. After their marriage, Ponna brought cows to her in-law's house but became a bane to her life by comparing her with her own cow. She says that, "After the wedding, she had fought with her father and had taken a cow from here. It delivered seven or eight calves, populating Kali's barn with its offspring. She'd tear up just looking at that cow . . . 'I don't have the boon that even this mute creature has been blessed with'" (8).

His woundedness grows sharper because while his cows are admired, he himself is mocked for lacking an heir. Patriarchy values one for his virility but denies his eco-masculine bond. Their woundedness starts after the participation of Ponna in the chariot festival; it was illustrated by Murugan as well. He says that:

Kali and Ponna's attempts to conceive a child have been unsuccessful. Hounded by the taunts and insinuations of others, all their hopes come to converge on the chariot festival in the temple of Madhurobhagan, the half-female god; everything hinges on the one night when the rules are relaxed and consensual union between any man and woman is sanctioned. This night could end the couple's suffering and humiliation, but it will also put their marriage to the ultimate test. (259)

Findings:

Eco-masculinity reveals the paradox here: patriarchal society recognizes animal virility as a reflection of manhood, but it simultaneously weaponizes Kali's reproductive failure and his dignity. His eco-masculine pride in cattle thus becomes entangled with his social wound. When humiliated, Kali turns back to land and cattle as emotional refuge. In moments of despair, he finds solace in the rhythms of farming and the silent companionship of his cows. The barnyard and nature provide a healing space for wounded masculinity. Unlike patriarchal society, which reduces him to an infertile man, the earth accepts him fully as caretaker and cultivator. It can also be seen in the novel how Kali has a deep bond for his barnyard. Ponna says that "Kali found it hard to be away from there for even a single day. His mind was constantly preoccupied by the sounds of his sheep and the cattle. Even if a small rat

had newly made the barnyard fence its home” (32).

Under this paradigm, Kali's bond with land and cattle demonstrates an alternative model of masculinity, one that is sustainable, tender, and ecologically grounded. His manhood is tied not to domination but to stewardship, not to reproduction but to reciprocal flourishing. Yet the tragedy of One Part Women's eco-masculine identity remains unrecognised and undervalued within his patriarchal society. Kali's dignity lies in his land and cattle, but his wound lies in society's blindness to this ecological masculinity. Kali emerged not simply as an infertile man or socially humiliated husband, but as a figure whose masculinity is deeply intertwined with ecological life.

Discussion about the Findings:

His identity is rooted in care, interdependence, and stewardship, expressed in his intimate relationship with land, crops, and cattle. The soil he cultivates, the seasons he follows, and the cows he tends form a network of ecological bonds that defines his worth and dignity beyond reproductive ability. Yet patriarchal society, which equates masculinity solely with virility and dominance, repeatedly wounds Kali. His inability to be a father, coupled with Ponna's socially coerced participation in the Chariot Festival ritual, underscores how societal definitions of manhood erase his eco-masculinity identity. His vulnerability, emotional depth, and sensitivity to ecological rhythms have been dismissed, leaving him marginalised and humiliated.

Kali's tragedy, therefore, is the erasure of ecological masculinity by hegemonic patriarchal norms. His life demonstrates that manhood can exist through care, ecological stewardship, and interdependence, not just through reproduction or domination. His life highlights his bond with land and cattle, his emotional fragility, and his ethical stance. The One Part Women sequence offers a profound critique of patriarchal masculinity while proposing an alternative, sustainable and relational model of manhood grounded in ecological consciousness. Kali's experience demonstrates the pressing need to promote ecological masculinity in society. Patriarchal models reduce men to their reproductive functions or economic productivity, causing emotional harm and erasing forms of masculinity grounded in care and ecological stewardship.

Conclusion:

Murugan's portrayal shows that, although Kali is fertile in relation to soil and cattle, society identified him as a barren man. This contrast illustrates how conventional masculinity undervalues ecological and emotional contributions. By adopting ecological masculinity, society can recognize men's worth beyond domination or reproduction, fostering emotional well-being, sustainable practices, and ethical relationships with nature. Kali's story shows that nurturing, vulnerability, and interdependence are strengths, not weaknesses. In contemporary terms, ecological masculinity can counter the environmental and social harms of patriarchal models, providing a more inclusive, life-affirming vision of manhood.

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